

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 DRC-01 AID-20 IO-14 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 PC-10 /125 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0193

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

/USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8579

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF NEW PRIME MINISTER LIJ MICHAEL IMRU:
EMBASSY COMMENTS

REF: (A) ADDIS 8570; (B) ADDIS 8494; (C) ADDIS 8574

THERE FOLLOW EMBASSY'S COMMENTS ON SUBJECT APPOINTMENT:

1. IN ABSENCE ANY EVIDENCE TO CONTRARY EMBASSY MUST
ASSUME THAT LIJ MICHAEL IMRU, NOW IN GENEVA--WHO HAD
BEEN ONE OF THOSE MINISTERS IN THE ENDELKACHEW COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS (CM) NOTABLE BY THEIR ABSENCE ABROAD
DURING MUCH OF HIS TENURE--HAS BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT HIS SELECTION
AND HAS AGREED TO SERVE.

2. LIJ MICHAEL EXPECTED ENTER UPON HIS NEW RESPONSIBILITIES
WITH A NUMBER OF THINGS GOING FOR HIM:
(A) HIS "LIBERAL" REPUTATION IS VERY MUCH IN TIME WITH THE TIMES
HERE AND HIS APPOINTMENT THUS LIKELY BE WELL RECEIVED BY BROAD
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SEGMENT ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC INTERESTED IN COUNTRY'S POLITICAL,

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RENEWAL.

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B) LIJ MICHAEL NOT THEREFORE AS HANDICAPPED AS WAS HIS PREDECESSOR BY HIS LINK TO COUNTRY'S NOBILITY. TO CONTRARY, HIGH REGARD IN WHICH HIS FATHER RAS IMRU CONTINUES TO BE HELD BY MANY ETHIOPIANS ("HE GAVE AWAY MOST OF HIS LAND, YOU KNOW") SHOULD ALSO ASSIST NEW PM- DESIGNATE'S RETURN TO PREEMINENCE ON ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL STAGE. MOREOVER, AFCC BELIEVED MRE INCLINED TO TRUST AND RESPECT HIM THAN WAS EVER CASE WITH ENDELKACHEW, WHO WAS CONSIDERED BY MANY YOUNG OFFICERS AS PARTICULARLY VENAL AND OPPORTUNISTIC. (C) ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL PROCESS BRINGS LIJ MICHAEL TO PREMIERSHIP AFTER MANY KEY TENANTS OF REACTIONARY ACIEN REGIME NEUTRALIZED OR SWEEPED AWAY. HE THUS HAS FEWER OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME THAN DID ENDELKACHEW.

3. ON OTHER HAND MICHAEL IMRU ASSUMES OFFICE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD OFFER CHALLENGE TO THE MOST CONSUMMATE POLITICAIN:

(A) HE IS NOT THE AFCC'S FIRST CHOICE. AS NOTED IN MILITARY COMMITTEE'S ANNOUNCEMENT (PARA 1 (F) REF (C), AFCC CONSULTED "SEVERAL PEOPLE" BEFORE SETTLING ON LIJ MICHAEL. AFCC'S CONFIDENCE IN LATTER' ABILITY TO PERFORM MUST THEREFORE HAVE LIMITATIONS. (B) NEW PRIME MINISTER EXPLICITLY HEADS TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION INTENDED FUNCTION ONLY UNTIL REVISED CONSTITUTION BECOMES OPERATIVE, HOPEFULLY BEFORE END THIS YEAR. IT HTUS OBVIOUSLY DIFFICULT FOR HIM COMPILE RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT LIKELY HELP HIM CONTEND SUCESSFULLY FOR CONTINUING LEADERSHIP IN PRESUMABLY MORE ENDURING REGIME TO FOLLOW ACTIVATION NEW CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM.

(C) NEW INCUMBENT IS JUSTLY KNOWN AS WEAK ADMINISTRATOR WHO OFTEN FINDS DECISION-MAKING DIFFICULT. DILEMMA THIS COULD POSE MIGHT PROVE SIGNIFICANT IF AFCC DOES GIVE MICHAEL IMRU COUNCIL MINISTERS LATITUDE TO ACT IN EXPECTATION THAT GOVERNMENTAL PARALYSIS WHICH HAS AFFLICTED IEG FOR LAST SEVERAL MONTHS MUST AND CAN BE BROKEN UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP.

4. THIS BRINGS US TO KEY POINT, WHICH IS WILLINGNESS AFCC GRANT CIVIL GOVERNMENT ADEQUATE BACKING AND FOLLOW-THROUGH SUPPORT. WITHOUT IT NEITHER MICHAEL IMRU CABINET NOR ANY OTHER EXPECTED BE ABLE ACCOMPLISH MUCH. TO OBTAIN IT MICHAEL IMRU LIKELY MUST QUICKLY DEMONSTRATE HIGH QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND PRESENT
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INNOVATIVE POLITICAL PROGRAM CONSONANT WITH AFCC'S OWN CONCEPTIONS OF COUNTRY'S NEEDS. IN OTHER WORDS HE MUST CHALLENGE MILITARY MAKE GOOD ON THEIR PROFESSIONS OF REFORM BY ENABLING NEW PRIME MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES TO IMPLEMENT MODERNIZING PLATFORM. LEADERSHIP FAILURE WOULD LEAVE NEW PRIME MINISTER ANOTHER ENDELKACHEW IN EYES AFCC, STYMIED BY LACK MILITARY SUPPORT AS WELL AS DEAD HAND OF DEVALUED CIVIL AUTHORITY ERODED BY REPEATED MILITARY PRESSURES, LATELY GENERATED UNDER GUIDANCE AFCC.

WHOLE NATION KNOWS WHICH WAY POWER BALANCE HAS SWUNG. WITHOUT LEADERSHIP BY PRIME MINISTER AND OBVIOUS AFCC SUPPORT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT GIVE CIVIL SERVANTS AND MINISTERS THEMSELVES RENEWED SENSE OF JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY THEY NEED TO ACT. ABILITY MICHAEL IMRU EXERCISE SUCH LEADERSHIP UNLIKELY TO FACILITATED BY ANTICIPATED EARLY APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS NOT OF HIS OWN CHOOSING BUT ONES SELECTED BY OR ACCEPTABLE TO AFCC IN FIRST INSTANCE TO FILL VACANT CM SLOTS-OR REPLACE CABINET OFFICERS DEEMED WEAK OR OTHERWISE UNSUITABLE.

5. SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE OF COURSE THAT AFCC INTENDS RETAIN DIRECTION OF AFFAIRS, COME WHAT MAY, AND USE BUREAUCRACY HEADED BY LIJ MICHAEL TO DO ITS BIDDING. IF SO, WE COULD AGAIN FACE SITUATION IN WHICH CABINET GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT AUTHORITY WHILE SEMI-COVERT AFCC ATTEMPTING WIELD AUTHORITY WITHOUT FORMAL RESPONSIBILITY. RESULT LIKELY PROVE ANOTHER UNWORKABLE ARRANGEMENT DUE INABILITY AFCC AT THIS JUNCTURE OPERATE AS AN EFFECTIVE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT. THIS LIKELY LEAD TO DEMORALIZATION OF THOSE WHOSE EXPECTATIONS FOR RAPID MEANINGFUL PROGRESS WOULD REMAIN UNMET.

6. WE HAVE DESCRIBED PROBLEMS FACED BY NEW PRIME MINISTER. IF MICHAEL IMRU FAILS TO EXERCISE REQUISITE LEADERSHIP, WE NOT RPT NOT PREDICTING THIS WOULD OF NECESSITY LEAD TO HIS OVERTHROW. GIVEN TRANSITIONAL NATURE HIS CABINET HE MIGHT BE TOLERATED UNTIL TRANSITION ENDS. SUCH FAILURE WOULD, HOWEVER, MEAN THAT (A) MICHAEL IMRUS TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER WOULD END WITH ADVENT NEW CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM; (B) FRUSTRATION/IMPATIENCE IN AFCC, GENERAL PUBLIC AND MANY INTEREST GROUPS LIKELY BE GREATER THAN EVER; AND (C) NEW PRIME MINISTER LIKELY BE SELECTED FROM AMONG POLITICAL STRATUM EVEN FURTHER REMOVED THAN MICHAEL IMRU FROM CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDE OF TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN LEADERSHIP.

7 THESE ISSUES ASIDE, DEPARTMENT WILL WISH NOTE THAT UNDER CURRENT CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSTITUTION MEMBERS CM ARE INDIVIDUALLY RESPONSIBLE TO PRIME MINISTER AND EMPEROR. WE ASSUME THEREFORE THAT OPERATION OF THIS CONSTITUTION DOES NOT REQUIRE AUTOMATIC RESIGNATION OF CABINET FOLLOWING APPOINTMENT NEW PRIME MINISTER. AS ALREADY NOTED, HOWEVER, FURTHER CABINET CHANGES SHOULD NEVERTHELESS BE EXPECTED IN RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE.
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